

James T. Jeremiah
Discipleship
December 3, 1975

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Shall we look to the Lord in a word of prayer? Our father, we're grateful this morning. We have a God who loves us and a savior who died for us, and the spirit who indwells us. We're grateful for the fact that we have the assurance, that he will take us through the waters, through the fires, through the troubles. We're grateful for his care. Bless this morning, as we meet around the word of God, and may we magnify the name of our savior, meet the needs of every one of us here today. May Christ be glorified as we honor him through his word, in Jesus name. Amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, it's nice to be back in chapel. I'll be leaving again this afternoon, I thought I ought to say, I'm glad you're back, and you've had a good Thanksgiving. And in case I don't see you again, I hope you have a good Christmas. That's terrible, isn't it? But it's the way it is, and we're having some good meetings in various places, and I think some successful banquets in various areas for the chapel, and we're glad for the way God is meeting the need. We wish we had more money every day. We could go and bring in thousands of dollars, but we're getting some, and we're grateful for your prayers and for your interest. And for all that you're doing to help and making the chapel a reality. Some of you have come back from the Thanksgiving vacation with the list of names that Mr. Turner's office had asked you to bring. A number of you have done this, and we appreciate it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Some of you are planning to do it, and you haven't gotten it out of the mailbox yet or something. And maybe you could have somebody back home help you if you haven't had the time to do it, but you can be a real help to the college, if you will just make out the names, put the names on the list that you think people would be interested in hearing about the school. And we assure you that will not make a personal contact with them and try to remove them from their money. If they feel led of God to give it, of course, we're going to be there with both hands to take it, but we're not going out with that objective and sending this material, it's going to be a service, a publication, and we wish that you would cooperate those of you who haven't, and those of you who plan to.

James T. Jeremiah:

During World War II, there was quite an interesting, rather tragic thing that happened. The boat called the Dorchester sailing near the coast of England was hit by a torpedo or had some accident, began to sink. On that boat, there were four chaplains. And as they watched that boat go down, they gave their life jackets to some of the men on the boat and they all died. One of those men was a man by the name of Clark Poling. And just a little while before this terrible thing happened, he had written to his parents and he said, something like this, please don't pray that God will keep us safe. War is a dangerous thing. Just pray that God will make us adequate. Well, that ought to be our prayer. We're in a battle. We're facing an enemy. And some of you in this school may leave these halls and go out into Christian work and you may give your lives.

James T. Jeremiah:

James T. Jeremiah
Discipleship
December 3, 1975

Any one of us may. We need not pray that we would be safe, but that God would make us adequate. I think that's another way of saying, God, make me a disciple. Did you say, I am? Not necessarily, there are many more Christians than there are disciples. God doesn't have just a few children. He has many, but unfortunately among God's children, there are too few disciples. I've been thinking about discipleship in recent days. It's been a challenge to my own heart, but I recognize that I'm not a very good one on many occasions. I thought often, of that passage, where Jesus said, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. I thank God that one day as a 19 year old agnostic kid, I trusted Jesus Christ and he gave me rest. And I've enjoyed that rest and that peace with God ever since. Well, then I read on, take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest. He gives rest, when we trust him for salvation. We find rest, when we obey him in discipleship.

James T. Jeremiah:

On a couple of occasions, while we've been touring in the mid East, we've seen pictures of, or seen not pictures, actually, people plowing with oxen. You'll see pictures of it as it happened in the early days of this country. But you go to some of these countries like Turkey and you'll see them doing this. And you'll see an oxen, one on each side of that yoke, and they tell me that sometimes they'll put a big one and a little one. The big one teaches the little one how to pull the burden. Well, when it comes to being a yoke fellow with Christ, a disciple of the Lord, Jesus, I'm glad he carries the heavy burden. Our burden is light. His burden is heavy. He carries the heavy burden, but he teaches us to be his disciples. Now, a disciple is one who learns. This involves the teacher-pupil relationship and the Lord Jesus Christ is the teacher and we as individuals, are the disciples.

James T. Jeremiah:

The disciple will follow the teacher and his philosophy, his practices, and his way of life. Obediently, following what he teaches and what he commands. There are many things the Bible has to say about disciples. It's mentioned only once in the old Testament. Never do we find the word in the epistles. Very interesting. Why not? Well, the Bible says the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. And that means that these disciples took the name because it was a name of ridicule. And they act like Christ people. And they were called Christians because they were Christ-like. They were still disciples when they did this. In recent days, three verses in the gospel of John have come to my attention in a new way, and I'd like to pass them on to you. So if you'll open your Bibles, we will talk about discipleship, as the gospel of John teaches it.

James T. Jeremiah:

First of all, there is John 8:31. Then said Jesus to those Jews, which believed on him if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. Live in accordance with what I teach says, Jesus, and you will be truly my disciples. This is the experience of discipleship. And there are several things about it, I'd like to mention. To continue in his word, brings the experience of a personal commitment. The word, live. The idea of continuing here is the word abide. And it means to live in the word, living to learn what he teaches. This is a personal commitment and it is more than an academic process. It's more than reading 50 chapters a week for Old Testament survey.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's living in the word of God as your guide and as your food and as your strength, and finding the promises there to be sufficient for your need. It involves increased knowledge. Paul wrote to Timothy, and he said, continue in the things which thou has learned. Well, you don't continue in the things you've learned, if you haven't learned the things in which you are to continue. And so you and I have to keep on growing in knowledge about the word of God. Anybody, I don't care who it is, who feels he has arrived when it comes to acquiring and having all the knowledge that he can have about God and about his word is deceiving himself. We can live until we're 80, perhaps, but if we live on and on every day we live, there's something new we can learn about the God of the Bible and about the Bible that has come from God. Increase knowledge. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

That's an idea that comes, I think because we live in the word of God and become his disciples, indeed. This is the experience. The blessed experience of being a disciple has to do with spiritual growth. Second Corinthians, 3:18. We're told about beholding in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed from glory unto glory by the spirit of the Lord. What is the glass into which we look? I think it's the word of God. We look into the glass, into the glass of his word. And as we read it, the spirit of God uses it, and we grow in a spiritual way. Hopefully, we're better off spiritually, stronger spiritually today than we were yesterday. Hopefully, that as the years go on, we ought to be stronger for the Lord in our spiritual life than we were years gone by.

James T. Jeremiah:

Has to do also, I think with willing conformity. Live in accordance with what I teach, he said. Be not conformed to this world, Paul said. And that we're not conformed to this world. We ought to be conformed to him by his word. And the thing is, folks, as sure as we're alive, if we read the word of God and find out what it says, and we believe it, gradually day by day, our lives will conform to what it teaches. There is no other way around it. There's no other thing that will happen. Now you can read it. I remember years ago we had evangelistic meetings in our church and we had a man who came to church to hold meetings. And he got the people on a Bible reading marathon.

James T. Jeremiah:

How many chapters can you read, in two weeks? We had people reading chapters they didn't even know they were chapters and they're reporting them every night, 25, 30, 50. They all came to the end of the week and they'd read hundreds of chapters. And that was one of the great successes of the campaign. How many thousand chapters could you read in two weeks? Well, there's nothing wrong with that, except you can read it and read it, don't let it say anything to you. And some of us Baptists, we don't have prayer beads. We just have so many verses we read every day to say, we read them. More than that, it is not only reading it and hearing it, living it conforming to it, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, the experience of discipleship.

James T. Jeremiah:

And there is a resulting liberty that comes because of this. Verse 32, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Hear a lot these days, about Christian liberty. And to some people Christian liberty is to be saved and to do as you please, without any rules, without regulations, without any commandments, without any guideline, just live it up brother, you're a Christian, so what? That is not

James T. Jeremiah
Discipleship
December 3, 1975

biblical teaching. If we are continuing in his word and our lives are guided and directed and motivated by it, we will have all the liberty that we want and all the liberty we need. We'll have liberty to do as we please because we will have groups that please him.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, you better take that statement all together. Not take part of it. The word of God, surely it gives us a freedom, liberty that you don't have, if you're not a Christian. I don't wake up in the morning and look on a list of things and say, well, now, do I have to do this today? Now, if I don't do this today, what's going to happen to me? That's not the way to live the Christian life. There is a liberty that comes when you continue in the word, but don't try to get that liberty in the Christian life that doesn't have a relationship to the word of God. The words of our savior. Well, that's the experience of discipleship. Continuing in the word. The second thing we find in 13:35, the expression of discipleship. The sense of this verse is, if you keep on showing love one to another, then are ye my disciples. 13 and verse 35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, the idea is not an occasional outburst of Christian charity. The thought of the text is that it's a way of life. Love is the badge of the disciple. I remember years ago preaching a message on the badge of the Christian. And I used as an illustration, how people in the world who belong to fraternal orders, they're not at all ashamed about the things they wear, to identify their crowd or their lodge. I remember years ago, going to the city of Detroit to attend a meeting. And we went downtown when they were having a big Shriners convention. And if you want to see something very interesting, you want to see a Shriner dressed up with a fez on his head and orange bloomers on his legs. He is a sight, but he was wearing his badge.

James T. Jeremiah:

Have any of you belong to the Shriners, Lord have mercy on you. You'll make it someday. Get out of that thing. But anyway, how did I get on that subject? You aren't a Shriner? Are you, Mr. White? Okay. All right. I'll just go ahead. I have something to get even with him about today. So you'll understand. Anyway, the badge of the Christian, what is it? Well, is it something I can get along without? Do I have to wear the badge of the Christian? Well, if you're a Christian, you will, because it's commanded. Verse 34 of this chapter, it says, a new commandment have I given to you, that you love one another. A commandment, not optional. Now, I'm not talking this morning about this love business, about how you fell in love with Jane or June or Bill or Sam. I'm not talking about that. I think that, that's a good idea.

James T. Jeremiah:

If you feel that, that's the thing you want to do. I'm for love, that kind too. Can't be around this place and not be for it. And I've been in love for a long time. I like everybody else to be that way. I'm not talking about that necessarily. I'm talking about Christian love for Christian people, brothers, sisters, redeemed ones. I'm even talking about love for that roommate. I'm even talking about love for that teacher that gave you a paper to write, and has given you a challenge that in a few days, you're going to have one of the most interesting examinations you've ever had. I'll tell you how to pass it. Love your teacher, and then do some studying. The word of God says that we, as believers are commanded to love

one another, to show God's love toward one another. How is that love defined? Well, he defines it, as I have loved you. Love is a costly thing, sometime.

James T. Jeremiah:

I remember reading about a man who was a missionary in China. This man was there when there was a great deal of famine and he had very little food of his own. But as he walked down the street, he saw a woman lying on the street about dead with a little baby in her arm. She was starving. And so he took a sweet potato that he had, just one, and he gave it to her. And this story is not exactly nice to think about, yet it is. That woman, with the little strength, she had left, put some of the potato in her mouth, chewed it and put her mouth to the infant's mouth and forced the potato into her infant's mouth. And shortly afterwards died. That is a good illustration of love. It's costly. It may be costly for you as a Christian, costly for me as a Christian, to do something that's very difficult for the glory of God and for the good of another Christian. It is compared, this kind of love, with a love Christ had, in giving himself. That hits home to me.

James T. Jeremiah:

When I realize loving Christians is my responsibility and my privilege, what I ought to do and what ought to come naturally because of the new birth, and I think of what he did and then I'm to love as he loved, that really hits home. How many of us can? How many of us do? But the thing that's very interesting is that love, this kind of love is convincing. By this, shall all know. John said, we know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. But two things about this. We know that we've passed from death unto life because we love. The world knows that we pass from death unto life because we love the brethren. We know, and they know. Not by our logic, not by our education, not by our degrees not by our rhetoric, not by our wealth, by our humility, but by love.

James T. Jeremiah:

Paul said, if any man have not this love, he's a rattling pan. He's a clanging clashing cymbal. He's a loud gong. He's a blaring brass. He only makes a noise. Clanging pans. That's not an interesting sound. No offense to the cymbal player, but I've never yet seen one of those guys play the scale. They're necessary in a symphony, but not in the church, in the sense of which I'm speaking. I remember reading about old Bullscot's lady, bless her heart. Somebody asked her how she could be so happy. She's in her eighties. How can you be so happy? She said, well, the first thing in the morning, I pick up a hymn book and I sing praise to God, just alone. Then I read the Bible and let the Lord speak to me. And she said, when I can't sing anymore and I can't read anymore, I just sit still and let the Lord love me.

James T. Jeremiah:

I think we have a need for that. Just sit still and let the Lord love us. If we did that, maybe we'd see something in his love. I would, I think, more than I do. We're so busy. We run all over the place. We get occupied with so many things. We don't even have time to understand down deep in our hearts that we have a God who loves us and who wants us to love one another and be disciples. The word of God tells us by this shall all men know that you're my disciples, if you have love, one toward another. One more and we'll be finished. Chapter 15, verse eight, you know these better than I. Let me read it for you again.

James T. Jeremiah:

James T. Jeremiah
Discipleship
December 3, 1975

Herein is my father glorified, that you bear much fruit. You bear much fruit. So shall you be my disciples. This is the evidence of discipleship. We've talked about the expression of discipleship and the experience of discipleship. And this is the evidence of it. Bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. Now this chapter is a very fascinating, wonderful portion of scripture. Jesus is the vine. We are the branches, we're united to him. Without him, separate from him, we can do nothing. Separate from him, we cannot produce fruit. Related to him, we can. It starts out with no fruit, with fruit, with more fruit and much fruits and remaining fruit. All in this portion of scripture. And this fruit he's talking about is not tied on. We'll go home pretty soon. We'll have all these ornaments tied on the Christmas tree. That's the way some professing Christians look. They have it all tied on. Tinsel. And that looks pretty.

James T. Jeremiah:

Did you ever try to taste it, or try to eat it, or try to get any profit out of it? Brother, when you purchased the tinsel and the bulbs for the Christmas tree, all the profit has gone. You spent it. And before very long, if you don't have the misfortune of breaking it yourselves, you'll get married and have five or six kids and they'll break it for you. You won't gain anything. It'll all be gone. It's just tinsel, tied on. That's not the fruit he's talking about here. It's fruit that comes from the vine to the branches. And it is the symbol of light. The evidence of being a disciple. Now it is his fruit that is produced. If he's the vine and I'm the branch, then the fruit that comes, comes because he is producing it.

James T. Jeremiah:

You have a reference to the spirit, the fruit of the spirit in Galatians five, we could read this, but I want to talk about three or four things about the fruit that Jesus produces. What does he produce in our lives, if we are his disciples? He produces a righteous life. Jesus had no sin, did no sin, knew no sin. Of all the people who ever lived in the world, he's the only one who could say the god of this world has nothing in me. And Philippians 1:11. It says that we're to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. You see, friend, today, the Christian life, the Christian disciples' life is not something that's tied on. It's something that lives through, and it is utterly impossible for a non-Christian to have a righteous life as it would be for a tomato vine to grow watermelon. Can't do it.

James T. Jeremiah:

The evidence is a submissive will. Romans 15:3. We're going to be Christ-like, submissive will. Listen to this one. For even Christ pleased not himself. Means a humble mind. Let this mind be in you. Took upon himself, a form of a servant, became obedient unto death. Even the death of the cross. It means a compassionate heart. He saw the multitudes. He saw the multitudes. He didn't see just a few. He saw them all. And he was moved with compassion. On in the scriptures, it says, Jesus, beholding, he saw the individual, loved him. Even the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. I recognize that many times this fruit bearing is applied to soul-winning and I think it can be.

James T. Jeremiah:

But let's remember that the soul winning will come as the Lord lives through us, and the compassion is there for other people. Let me ask you as I close, are you a disciple? Am I one? Will I continue in his word and have the experience of discipleship? Will I show forth the love of Christ and the expression of

James T. Jeremiah
Discipleship
December 3, 1975

discipleship? Do I, as a believer in Jesus Christ, bear fruit, show the evidence of it. These verses have challenged me. Hope they will you. Let's be Christians, but let's see what God can do to make us disciples, to follow him in life. Dear Lord, speak to us today. We thank thee for the comfort of scripture, for its help, for the message in song today, it was a blessing to us. Thank you for the hymn we used today, in magnifying God and showing forth his glory. Be with our hearts through this day and the days that lie ahead and help us to honor Christ, be disciples, Lord. Make us disciples, disciples indeed, in Jesus name. Amen.